

Immortality for Real

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Date: 05 April 2026

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[0 : 00] They were the priests.

They were the Pharisees. They were the teachers of the law.! They were the priests of the law. They were the priests of the law.

The more he exposed their hypocrisy and heartlessness and their lack of understanding. And as the week goes on, we hear again and again how frustrated and angry they were getting with Jesus. Mark 12, 12. Then the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd.

[1 : 59] So they left him and went away. Then again in Mark 14, a little later on. Now the Passover and the festival of unleavened bread were only two days away.

And the chief priests and the teachers of the law were scheming to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. But not during the festival, they said, where the people may riot.

One of the problems for the religious leaders in their scheming was how to get at Jesus without making a public spectacle. Jesus seemed to so easily gain the favor and the amazement of the people as he taught in the temple courts each day.

And there were so many of his devout followers with him at all times. And he wasn't even staying in Jerusalem in the evenings. He would head out of the city to different places in the evenings.

So they needed a way to get their hands on Jesus when no one was looking. Well, finally they found a way. When Judas, one of the twelve disciples, decided to talk with them and find out what Jesus was worth.

[3 : 12] An arrangement was made. Judas would hand Jesus over to them in exchange for about four months' wages worth of silver. Well, finally came the eve of the Passover celebration.

Jesus ate the Passover meal with his disciples. As we just reflected on, Judas slipped away during that meal. And then afterwards, Jesus and the eleven went out to an olive grove called Gethsemane.

And it was there Judas showed up with a crowd of armed men sent by the religious leaders. They arrested Jesus and his disciples scattered.

They took Jesus to the high priest in the night where he was questioned. Though the questioning was not to investigate or gain understanding, the verdict had already been decided.

Rather, they were pondering and scheming about what they could accuse Jesus of and how to secure his death in a way that didn't appear to be murder. Early in the morning, they called a meeting of the Sanhedrin, which is the Jewish ruling council.

[4 : 33] And it was really more of the same. It was a sham trial with numerous false testimonies brought against Jesus. Some that didn't even agree with each other.

Jesus was silent and didn't answer any of their charges or accusations. Finally, when asked point blank if he was the Messiah, the Son of God, he admitted, I am.

And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven. They charged him right there with blasphemy.

They condemned him as worthy of death. And they mocked him. And they beat him. Then they hauled Jesus off to Pilate, the Roman governor.

And they demanded that Pilate put him to death since he claimed to be a king. Pilate examined Jesus himself. And he realized that the religious leaders had brought Jesus to him out of self-interest.

[5 : 43] And not because he had committed a crime. Pilate tried to play the crowd against the religious leaders and against the council at first.

But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to demand Jesus be executed by crucifixion. Pilate was reluctant to give in to their demands and condemn an innocent man.

But the crowd just kept shouting and shouting and shouting. And eventually Pilate gave in and handed Jesus over to be crucified. Jesus was mocked and beaten by the Roman soldiers.

And then he was made to carry the cross on which he would be crucified out to the place where he was to be put to death. They stripped Jesus naked.

And then they nailed him to a wooden cross. And hung him up to die. A slow and agonizing death.

And even as he hung there, the leaders continued to mock him and insult him.

[6 : 42] And insult him.

finally as we heard earlier he breathed his last after six long hours on the cross just before sunset a member of the council who believed in Jesus a man named Joseph went to Pilate and got permission to have Jesus' dead body and he removed it from the cross wrapped it with strips of linen and then laid it in his own tomb he rolled a stone across the entrance and the last thing Mark mentions that day is how two women who had been followers of Jesus saw where his body had been laid it was a dark and ugly day and as it came to a close and the Sabbath day began we can only imagine how the disciples of Jesus felt all those who had believed in him everything just ground to a halt for the Sabbath day and there they were left to sit in such sorrow probably having already cried every tear that they could numb confused confused aching with grief meanwhile others were celebrating and rejoicing that they had finally rid themselves of Jesus of Nazareth this is what led up to that first day of the week three days later

Mark tells us that when the Sabbath was over Mary Magdalene Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body Mark says they went after the Sabbath was over so these women were followers of Jesus probably they would have done this thing with the spices immediately after Jesus has died as part of his funeral or his burial but Jesus died just three hours before the Sabbath began and this was a special Sabbath being the Passover the sense we get is that Joseph did well to get the body and wrap it and get it in the tomb before nightfall on the day that Jesus died and then on the Passover Sabbath it was the law that no Jew could be out doing any kind of work or shops and merchants they would have been closed there had just been no time for the usual funeral stuff anointing the body with fragrant spices was something typically done to honor the one who had passed away and it kind of made more sense it makes more sense when there's going to be a public funeral people may see the body or be near the body the fragrant spices would have helped with the smell not unlike what the perfumes and stuff that the funeral homes do today yet even though there had been no proper funeral these women still had it in their hearts to do something for Jesus and so they bought these spices and they made this plan to go and put them on Jesus body verse 2 very early on the first day of the week just after sunrise they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb we don't know exactly why they went so early was it a matter of urgency to do what was fitting for the one that they had loved and followed was it fear of the religious leaders and the opponents of Jesus perhaps both but there they were at dawn getting things ready and making their way to the tomb and Mark gives us just one piece of the conversation on the way there who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb if we glance up the page to verse 47 of the previous chapter the women had seen

Joseph put Jesus body into the tomb and then roll the stone over the opening and so they knew that this could pose a problem and if we look down in 16 to verse 4 the stone was very large it was likely large enough and heavy enough that the women simply knew it would be impossible even together to get it rolled away from the opening we don't know this for sure but it's possible the tomb was even designed in such a way that it would be easy for the stone to roll down with the help of gravity to cover the entrance but then hard to get it open in order to make it difficult for people to get in and disturb the remains of loved ones and so that was the conversation as they went at the crack of dawn who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb we can't do it hopefully some guys will be there who can help us with this but then as they draw near to the tomb that concern completely evaporates and they're met with the unexpected they look up and they see that the stone has already been rolled away and then comes an even bigger surprise as they entered the tomb they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side and they were alarmed now let's think about the stone for a minute that it had been rolled away when they got there was already cause for concern imagine the questions and the wonderings they may have had in those

moments why is it rolled away have others come to do what we have come to do or has something bad happened have the leaders done something to disturb or further dishonor the body of Jesus what's going on here so that was already cause for concern but then

I imagine their hearts just went straight to pounding as they enter the tomb and the first thing they see is this young man dressed in white we know from the other gospel accounts that this young man was an angel one of two actually and we know from the other gospels as well that their clothes gleamed like lightning and that these women really were frightened alarmed maybe doesn't quite capture it in our English rendering here they fell to the ground in front of them we read in another gospel Mark's description of this angel as a young man seems to highlight the form and perhaps the face he looked like a young man Matthew and Luke's descriptions highlight the brightness and the radiance of the angel's clothing which was utterly spectacular the women see this young man and they just hit the deck in panic and then the angel speaks to them verse 6 don't be alarmed he said you are looking for

[14 : 29] Jesus the Nazarene who was crucified he has risen he is not here see the place where they laid him but go tell his disciples and Peter he is going ahead of you into Galilee there you will see him just as he told you try to imagine yourself in that moment there with the women as this is happening I imagine myself being utterly speechless don't be alarmed like are you kidding my heart is pounding I have no idea what's going on right now who are you why are your clothes shining so brightly where's where's Jesus body what on earth is happening you are looking for

Jesus the Nazarene who was crucified whoever this guy is he knows why I'm here yes we are looking for Jesus the Nazarene the one who was crucified but then come the most shocking words of all he is risen he is not here see the place where they laid him what do you mean he is risen I mean those words he is risen they feel really familiar to us as Christians today because we love to talk about the resurrection and we do but those words probably didn't click immediately for the women back then rising isn't something that usually happened with dead people just like today in fact the word mark uses here is quite generic risen is a good translation because it's not quite as specific as our

English word resurrected this word to rise I mean that was the same word they used to describe people rising from sleep in the morning to hear something of what they may be heard we could even translate this in language that we're more familiar with the angel basically says to them he's gotten up he's not here it's the same word that Jesus used when he healed some different people that couldn't walk get up pick up your mat and go home and the point here is that these women were probably quite perplexed at first to hear this like what do you mean he's gotten up that's impossible we saw his body laid right there and the angel just tries to you know drive the point home well no look look there that's where you saw him his body put it's not there anymore and the angel goes on verse 7 go tell his disciples and Peter he's going ahead of you into Galilee there you will see him just as he told you so by this point I mean at least to us as we read this it's becoming obvious that yeah risen meant resurrection Jesus must be alive he's now going somewhere he's headed up north to Galilee right now they're in Jerusalem not only is Jesus on the move but tell Peter and the other disciples that they will see him there I wonder how long it took in that moment for them to just understand what the angel was saying how long before they realized that Jesus was actually alive again as in resurrected from the dead the next thing we hear from Mark is the immediate response of the women to all of this trembling and bewildered the women went out and fled from the tomb they said nothing to anyone because they were afraid so this really tells us a lot about what the women were thinking and feeling they were physically shaking trembling they were bewildered this was utterly confusing think about this there was the unbelievable grief and anguish of heart that they brought with them to the tomb after witnessing Jesus death death then there was the shock and surprise of finding the tomb not as they expected and seeing this angel there and the adrenaline you can imagine just flowing in their bodies their hearts pounding the fear but the message of the angel is cause for joy it's that Jesus is no longer dead that he's alive again all of this at once and so no wonder they were deeply confused and bewildered Mark ends his account of what happened at the tomb with how they said nothing to anyone because they were afraid so with Mark we get sort of the immediate first reaction the first response to that moment that they discovered Jesus had risen from the dead even the word that that's used to describe what the women did they fled it's a word that usually means to run away from perceived danger or to run to a place of safety this was the first response of the women the

immediate response in that moment when they discovered that

[20 : 48] Jesus had come back to life from the dead and their response was raw and visceral we're not even sure by the end of verse eight if they fully believed the words of the angel we're kind of left by Mark wondering about how the story would continue when came that moment in the story where each of them sort of figured it out how did they all come to realize that Jesus really had come back to life from the dead and this is the wonderful thing about having four different accounts in the Bible of the story of Jesus the gospels the other ones sort of fill in some of those details each one has a different perspective and a little different emphasis and we can look at Matthew and Luke and John and we can read about some of those face to face encounters with the women and Jesus with Mary Magdalene and Jesus with

Peter and the disciples and Jesus it's a wonderful story of what really happened 2000 years ago one thing that we haven't talked about yet is why the angels you ever thought about that why why the angel what's the significance of the angel who spoke at the tomb I mean for some of us this might seem obvious but others of us just sort of get caught up in the excitement of it what are the angels what purpose do they serve I don't want to linger too long on this but the Bible tells us that angels at least the ones that haven't rebelled against God are the servants of God they do whatever God tells them to do and one of the key ways they serve God is as messengers in fact the Greek word for angel also means messenger and so thinking along those lines what do we notice about when angels appear to people often throughout the

Bible they come to bring a message and who's the author of that message well it's God the angels don't just show up to offer their own two senses sort of these other created beings oh yeah that's interesting well this is what's happening I know no they bring the very words of God their message is God's message and there are certain moments in history where God wanted it to be absolutely clear what was happening he didn't want it to be left up to human interpretation of the circumstances and so we see the angel appear to Zachariah at the temple we see the angel appear to Mary and to Joseph and to the shepherds at Jesus birth all of these critical moments in the story and then we see the angel appear to these women the day they discover an empty tomb God wanted it to be absolutely! in the midst of this emotionally confusing time that yes Jesus his son really had come back to life from the dead he is risen is not just the declaration of the angel it's the declaration of God the angel is just the messenger and so as these women ran there was lots to think about this is just some of what took place early in the morning three days after Jesus died on the first day of the week now why does this all matter maybe you're sitting here wondering so what that happened long ago so what this is a hard question to answer because answering it's kind of like opening the valve on a fire hydrant the resurrection of

Jesus matters so much there is so much that's affected by it and related to it and accomplished through it that it's difficult to even know where to start I feel like even beginning to open that valve on this question runs the risk of us just getting blasted in the face and knocked over it runs the risk of overwhelming us all so much that suddenly we're left bewildered wondering at the end of this sermon what am I supposed to even think there's so much there but we have to try to grab onto something don't we perhaps a start to why it matters can be found in the words of the apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians chapter 15 verse 12 Paul says but if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead if there's no resurrection of the dead then not even Christ has been raised and if Christ has not been raised our preaching is useless and so is your faith more than that we are then found to

[26 : 20] God for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead but he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised for if the dead are not raised then Christ has not been raised either and if Christ has not been raised your faith is futile you are still in your sins then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost if only for this life we have hope in Christ we are of all people most to be pitied now there's a lot there in simple terms Paul is saying that Jesus resurrection from the dead matters a lot it matters everything and he sort of takes us through this thought experiment doesn't he I mean if Christ hasn't been raised from the dead he has but let's just consider what would be true if he hadn't if

Christ hasn't been raised from the dead your faith in him is useless if Christ hasn't been raised from the dead your faith is futile good for nothing pointless if Christ hasn't been raised from the dead then you are still in your sins wow that means your guilt remains it means that Jesus death on the cross if he wasn't raised from the dead it didn't work it didn't accomplish what was needed if Jesus didn't

rise from the dead then everyone who has died believing in him is lost says Paul why are they lost because if Jesus wasn't raised from the dead then why should we expect to be raised from the dead either why should we expect eternal life if death won in the end over

Jesus then it will win over us when we die Paul says if all we get from Jesus is a better standing with God during this life and then we die then we are of all people most to be pitied in that case he goes on in this passage we might as well do the best we can to just live for the now let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die let's get the pleasures we can out of life so that Jesus rose from the dead matters everything alongside what his death accomplished his resurrection is the very cornerstone of our faith remove that stone and the whole thing crumbles there's nothing left that's the apostle Paul's answer to the question of why it matters it matters everything that

Jesus rose from the dead is the cornerstone of our faith so that's the first reason why it matters let's jump back to Mark's gospel I kind of went over to Paul in his letter to the Corinthians for a bit there but let's go back to Mark's gospel for a second and see the answer to why it matters from Mark's perspective what's the main point that Mark has been laboring to show us as he tells us the story of Jesus he gives it to us right out of the gate in verse one of his gospel the beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah the Son of God that's what Mark is laboring to show us as he tells the story of Jesus it's that this is who Jesus is if the story of Jesus simply ends with his execution and death on a cross would you believe that Jesus really was the Messiah or the Son of God I mean where's the reign of this king if the end of his story is just that he was rejected and died what about all the promises that were made through the prophets in the Old Testament times about how the Messiah would do all kinds of wonderful things even bring peace to all the nations of the earth and the government will be on his shoulders all these things that we're so familiar with Mark has been laboring to show us that he is the Messiah he is the son of God but if his story ends with just death then it calls everything into question everything he said how can we trust Jesus about all he has said that he will do in the future if Jesus isn't alive anymore to do it and so the resurrection of

[31 : 38] Jesus matters because it's the ultimate confirmation from God that the kingdom really has come near that Jesus really has come to ransom us he really is the doctor who can provide a cure for the sickness of sin he really is the shepherd king spoken of centuries beforehand through the prophets there really is a new covenant a new deal with God which Christ has successfully brokered there really is forgiveness to be found from God the resurrection is the ultimate sign and testimony from God that it's all true and because of the fact that only God can raise the dead back to life we know that it's God approving and saying yes this is real this is my son this is the king I have chosen okay so the resurrection of Jesus matters because it's the very cornerstone of our faith it matters because it's the proof the sign and the confirmation from God that it's all true and quickly one more reason why it matters we have to have three right there's always going to be three in the sermon there's of course lots of reasons why it matters but at the risk of drinking too much from the fire hydrant just one more reason the resurrection matters because it shows that there really is a power greater than death and there really is a remedy for us to that problem of death if you're young like me maybe you're not thinking about your own death or maybe someone you know has recently passed someone you love dearly and we just know that there is nothing we can do to undo that it's the great enemy of everyone death

I spent the better part of a week two weeks ago in Ecclesiastes at a preacher's workshop and what does Solomon lament in the book of Ecclesiastes Solomon laments that everything under the sun is fleeting and nothing lasts why because death eventually comes to us all and it snatches everything away from us and Solomon talks in that book about how it doesn't matter whether you are wise or foolish rich or poor strong or weak righteous or wicked death comes to all no matter how hard we try to cling to the life that God has given us under the sun death will pry it out of our hands and leave us as cold corpses buried in the local cemetery but a thousand years after Solomon comes the Messiah the very son of God and after being killed God raises him back to life from the dead he gives Jesus victory over our greatest enemy not temporarily but permanently this changes everything this changes how we look at death now as I read and listen to Jesus promising to raise me from the dead promising to give me eternal life I know that he can deliver because he came out of that tomb and so the resurrection of Jesus matters a lot it's a demonstration of how God can do what Jesus promised to all who believe in his name it's evidence that God really is stronger than our greatest enemy and so this isn't just good news this is great news in

Jesus we have found the cure to the greatest problem known to man we have found in Jesus immortality let's bring this to a close we look back to see how and why Jesus came to die on a cross how he was buried then we saw again through the eyes of Mark what happened on the first day of the week early in the morning three days later we heard God's own declaration he is risen and finally we talked about why it matters it matters because it's the very cornerstone of our faith without which we are guilty lost and simply wasting our time his resurrection matters because it's the proof that he really is the Messiah and the son of God and that everything he said was true and it matters because in it we see that

God really does have the power over death and that he can truly give us the resurrection Jesus promised and so today really is a good day to celebrate we must celebrate we must rejoice the kingdom has come near our sins really have been forgiven life forever with Jesus really does await all of us who belong to Christ because by the power of God 2,000 years ago God raised Jesus from the dead let's pray father in heaven we give you praise we give you honor and glory you can do the impossible your power is like nothing that we see here on earth and your grace too your love and kindness towards us that you would even want to welcome us sinners into an everlasting life relationship with you it blows our minds what can we say but thank you and we praise you we love you to your name be the glory amen